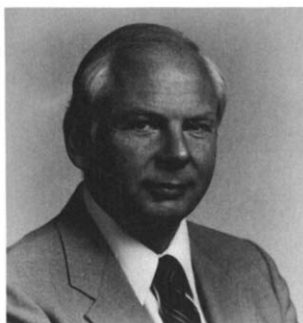


## EDITOR'S PAGE



## The Editorial Process

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Many authors and reviewers have expressed interest in learning more about the editorial process at JACC. I have listed below the major steps involved in the order in which they occur.

1. When a manuscript first arrives at the JACC office in San Francisco, it is logged into the computer by title, authors and institution and given an identifying number.

2. The Editor-in-Chief then assigns it to an editor—himself or one of the Associate Editors—on the basis of area of expertise. Any article submitted from the University of California, San Francisco, the institution with which I and the Associate Editors are affiliated, is sent to a guest editor, who independently carries out the subsequent review and decision processes.

3. The editor to whom the manuscript is assigned briefly reviews the manuscript. Rarely, the paper may be rejected at this point if all the editors concur that it is highly unlikely to be accepted. Usually, the editor selects a panel of potential reviewers who are qualified to review the manuscript. The selection is generally made from a continually updated computer listing of reviewers in a given subject area. This listing identifies the current editorial consultants for JACC, who are typically considered first. Reviewers ordinarily receive no more than one manuscript at a time, and there is usually a lag time of 1 month between a returned review and assignment of another manuscript to the reviewer.

4. The reviewer is asked to return the reviewed manuscript within 20 days of the date it is mailed from the JACC office. If the editorial staff has not received it on that date, they contact the late reviewer by fax or phone, or both. After two or three attempts to obtain the review, staff members turn the paper over to the responsible editor, who may assign a new reviewer or recommend a decision on the basis of one review. The editor may also elect to wait longer for the late review; although this option extends the overall review time, it is the preferred approach to avoid bias or an

incomplete review. In general, authors receive a decision within 6 weeks of manuscript submission, although circumstances can extend this period significantly.

5. When both reviews are returned to the JACC office, they are given to the appropriate editor to review and compare with his own perceptions. If both reviewers and the editor agree that the manuscript should be rejected, feedback from the other editors is not required but may be solicited. If there is a split decision, a third reviewer may be called on or the paper may be brought to the weekly editors' meeting for discussion.

6. At the weekly meeting, each editor presents split-decision manuscripts or manuscripts judged favorably by both reviewers. After appropriate discussion, the group decides whether to reject the manuscript or to hold it aside for further consideration on a priority basis.

7. After all manuscripts have been discussed, those that were held aside are further ranked on a priority basis. The editors attempt to maintain a balance of manuscripts covering all of cardiology. On average, though, only eight manuscripts a week can be accepted or returned to the author for revision. Those given a comparatively low priority are usually rejected at this time, although an editor may elect to carry them over to the following week for further consideration on a priority basis. A running tally of manuscripts accepted or returned for revision is kept over several weeks, so that the average is maintained at about eight manuscripts a week.

8. This process means, of course, that some manuscripts that have received relatively favorable reviews may be rejected on a priority basis. Unfortunately, we cannot accept more than one third of submitted manuscripts, without exceeding our allotted pages for the year. Although appeals for reconsideration of a rejected manuscript are reviewed, they are rarely successful. This is especially true if the manuscript was rejected because of low priority.

9. All tentatively accepted papers are sent to a statistical reviewer for comment on methodologic issues. Then a final decision to accept or request revision is made.

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10. If a decision is made to accept or request revision of a manuscript, we often ask the authors to shorten it so that we can eventually publish more papers.

11. A revised paper is returned to the responsible editor and frequently is sent back to the original reviewers to determine whether the appropriate revisions have been made. During this process, a manuscript may, on rare occasions, be rejected because the authors have not responded appropriately to or satisfactorily answered all of the reviewers' criticisms. More frequently, the revised paper is accepted.

12. At this point, the manuscript is sent to Elsevier Science Publishing Co. in New York for copyediting and typesetting.

13. Once a manuscript is in final form, it is scheduled for publication in the next open month. The Editor-in-Chief then reviews all the manuscripts accepted for a given month and groups them together under selected headings.

14. When proofs are sent to the authors before publication, it is mandatory that the authors review them in minute detail to be sure they are correct. Authors have the last look at their own work before publication.

Although this discussion of the editorial process was necessarily cursory, I hope it will help authors, reviewers and readers to understand how manuscripts are handled at *JACC* and the basis for editorial decisions.